

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
HA-05 IO-13 AID-05 PC-01 /092 W  
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R 211647Z JUL 78  
FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6498  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 3271

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, BR  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS: THE MAGALHAES PINTO ENIGMA

REF: BRASILIA 4431; BRASILIA 4239

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH MAINTAINING HIS ADHERENCE TO THE NATIONAL FRONT OF REDEMOCRATIZATION, SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO HAS REFUSED TO DROP HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN FAVOR OF UNDECLARED CANDIDATE GENERAL EULER BENTES MONTEIRO. RATHER HE HAS BROADENED HIS OPTIONS TO INCLUDE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT A FUTURE MEETING WITH THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATE, GENERAL FIGUEIREDO, AMID PUBLIC BICKERING OVER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES WITH GENERAL EULER BENTES. WHILE MDB SUPPORTERS OF THE LATTER ARE PUSHING FOR AN EARLY AUGUST PARTY CONVENTION TO DETERMINE THE PARTY'S POSITION RE A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, THE PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS REITERATED ITS VIEW THAT A DATE TOWARDS THE END OF AUGUST WOULD BE MORE PROPITIOUS POLITICALLY. MEANWHILE THE MDB IN MINAS GERAIS, THE SENATOR'S HOME STATE, HAS INDICATED IT WILL SUPPORT HIM IF HIS NAME COMES BEFORE THE NATIONAL PARTY CONVENTION. THE SENATOR'S ADROIT POLITICAL MANEUVERING HAS RETURNED HIM TO THE FOREFRONT AS A KEY PARTICIPANT IN THIS ELECTION YEAR'S POLITICS. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN THE SEVERAL WEEKS SINCE THE MISSION LAST REPORTED SPECIFICALLY ON THE MAGALHAES PINTO CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT (SEE RIO DE JANEIRO'S 2223), THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS (REFTELS). HOWEVER, ONE CONSTANT HAS BEEN MAGALHAES' STATED INTENTION TO PURSUE THE PRESIDENCY -- DESPITE OCCASIONAL AND EVIDENTLY TACTICAL HINTS TO

THE CONTRARY DURING THE INTENSE POLITICAL MANEUVERING OF THE PAST TWO MONTHS BY THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND THE REGIME.

3. WHILE HIS REAL MOTIVES REMAIN SUBJECT TO CONSIDERABLE DOUBT AND INTERPRETATION, MAGALHAES HAS CONTINUED TO DISPLAY A POLITICAL SHREWDNESS WHICH EVEN HIS OPPONENTS MUST ADMIRE. PARTICIPATING ALONG WITH RIVAL, POTENTIALLY "AVAILABLE" PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, GENERAL EULER BENTES MONTEIRO, AND THE OPPOSITION MDB IN THE NATIONAL FRONT OF REDEMOCRATIZATION, MAGALHAES HAS STUBBORNLY REFUSED TO BOW OUT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST IN FAVOR OF LATE-COMER GENERAL EULER DESPITE PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH THE GENERAL AND THE GENERAL'S EVIDENT SPOKESMAN WITH THE ARMY, GENERAL HUGO ABREU. MAGALHAES HAS ALSO EMPHATICALLY DECLINED EVEN TO CONSIDER A EULER-MAGALHAES OR MAGALHAES-EULER TICKET. HE HAS INSISTED THAT THE FRONT IS A USEFUL VEHICLE FOR MOBILIZING PUBLIC OPINION, BUT SHOULD ENDORSE NO CANDIDATE. (MAGALHAES' VIEWS PARALLEL THOSE OF MOST OF THE MDB LEADERSHIP, ALTHOUGH THE LATTER HAVE DIFFERENT REASONS FOR ADOPTING THIS POSITION.) AT THE SAME TIME, HE HAS SHARPLY DISAGREED WITH GENERAL EULER OVER MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE, SUCH AS ECONOMIC POLICY, TO SAY NOTHING OF THE GENERAL'S VIEW THAT ANOTHER MILITARY OFFICER IS ESSENTIAL AS AN OPPOSITION CANDIDATE AT THIS TIME. MAGALHAES HAS DUTIFULLY APPEARED AT FRONT RALLIES IN SAO PAULO, RECIFE AND MANAUS STATING HIS WELL-KNOWN VIEWS, WHICH APPEAR RELATIVELY MODERATE BOTH IN COMPARISON TO THE NATIONALISTIC ONES OF EULER AND THE OCCASIONALLY EMOTIONAL

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RHETORIC OF MDB PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES.

4. SIMULTANEOUSLY, MAGALHAES HAS KEPT HIS OPTIONS OPEN WITH THE REGIME. WHILE OBVIOUSLY CONTESTING THE REGIME'S AND THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATE'S POSITIONS ON MANY ISSUES, HE HAS NEVER CRITICIZED FIGUEIREDO PERSONALLY AND, IN FACT, REFERS TO HIM WITH RESPECT. MAGALHAES MET IN BRASILIA ON JULY 11 WITH SUPREME FEDERAL TRIBUNAL MINISTER LEITAO DE ABREU, APPARENTLY AT THE LATTER'S INITIATIVE, WITH THE RUMORED OBJECTIVES OF EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES OF A PERSONAL MEETING BETWEEN MAGALHAES AND FIGUEIREDO. DESPITE INTENSE PRESS SPECULATION THAT A MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO CANDIDATES WAS IMMINENT, MAGALHAES HAS INSISTED THAT NO MEETING WAS ARRANGED OR EVEN CONTEMPLATED AND THAT THERE IS NO UNDERSTANDING ABOUT A FUTURE MEETING. FOR THIS PART, FIGUEIREDO HAS INDICATED PUBLICLY HE WOULD NOT BE ADVERSE TO MEETING MAGALHAES.

5. IN OTHER PERIPHERAL DEVELOPMENTS, DISSIDENT ARENA EX-MINISTER SEVARO GOMES BOWED OUT, APPARENTLY WITH MAGALHAES' PERMISSION, FROM HIS VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY AS A MAGALHAES TICKET ON JULY 6 STATING THAT A TICKET COMPOSED OF TWO ARENA MEMBERS WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE MDB IN ITS CONSIDERATION OF A

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TO CONTEST FIGUEIREDO. LEADERS OF THE MDB IN MAGALHAES' HOME STATE OF MINAS GERAIS, TO INCLUDE MDB NATIONAL THIRD VICE PRESIDENT AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES LEADER TANCREDO NEVES, HAVE INDICATED THAT THE STATE MDB WILL SUPPORT MAGALHAES SHOULD HIS NAME COME BEFORE THE NATIONAL CONVENTION WHICH WILL CONSIDER THE PARTY'S ROLE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE. (SINCE TENCREDO HOPES TO WIN MAGALHAES' SENATE SEAT IN THE DIRECT ELECTION, IT IS IN HIS SELF-INTEREST TO KEEP MAGALHAES FOCUSED ELSEWHERE THAN RUNNING FOR RE-ELECTION TO THE SENATE. IT IS THE STATE MDB'S INTEREST TO KEEP THE SENATOR FROM ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING FOR ARENA CANDIDATES IN THE DIRECT CAMARA AND SENATE ELECTIONS OF NOVEMBER.) MEANWHILE, THE MINAS ARENA STATE PARTY CONVENTION MET JULY 20 TO SELECT CANDIDATES FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS. CONFIDENTIAL

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IT APPEARS AT THIS TIME THAT, AT LEAST THEORETICALLY, AN OPENING (SUB-LEGENDA) MAY BE LEFT AVAILABLE FOR THE SENATOR SHOULD HE DECIDE EVENTUALLY TO CONTEST AGAIN IN MINAS FOR THE SENATE ON THE ARENA TICKET.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 3271

6. LEFT-WING "AUTENTICO" MDB SUPPORTERS OF GENERAL EULER, WITH THEIR EFFORTS TO SEEK MAGALHAES' WITHDRAWAL HAVING FAILED, HAVE RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EARLY AUGUST PARTY CONVENTION DATE TO SELECT THE PARTY CANDIDATE AS WELL

AS HAVE SOLICITED A REGIONAL (STATE) PARTY GROUNDSWELL FOR EULER EVIDENTLY AS A MEANS OF PRESSURING THE CAUTIOUS PARTY LEADERSHIP ON THIS ISSUE. THESE EFFORTS HAVE THUS FAR BEEN RESISTED BY PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES AND IT APPEARS THE PARTY CONVENTION MAY BE HELD AT A DATE CLOSE TO SEPTEMBER 5, THE TIME LIMIT FOR HOLDING PARTY CONVENTIONS ACCORDING TO CURRENT LAW. ULYSSES' CAUTION STEMS NOT ONLY FROM THE FACT THAT THE MDB IS SPLIT BETWEEN THE FACTIONS SUPPORTING EULER (ESSENTIALLY THE LEFT OF CENTER "AUTENTICOS"), THOSE SUPPORTING MAGALHAES (THE MINAS MDB AND SOME OTHERS), AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT IN THE LONG TERM INTEREST OF THE PARTY (E.G., THE NOVEMBER DIRECT ELECTIONS) THE PARTY SHOULD NOT EXPEND ANY ENERGIES IN RUNNING A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WHOSE PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS ARE CONTINGENT ON ATTRACTING ARENA DISSIDENTS IN THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE AND MAINTAINING THE LOYALTY OF THE RIO MDB ELECTORAL CONTINGENT.

7. AT THIS TIME, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT, IN THE EVENT THE MDB ULTIMATELY OPTS FOR EULER BENTES, MAGALHAES REALISTICALLY  
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HAS NO PLACE TO GO BUT TO RETURN TO THE ARENA LOYALIST CAMP STRIKING A BARGAIN ALONG THE WAY WITH FIGUEIREDO. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS OWN PRONOUNCEMENTS WOULD SUGGEST THAT EVEN IN THE EVENTUALITY THAT THE MDB CHOOSES EULER (OR DECLINES TO PUT FORWARD A CANDIDATE), HE WILL CONTINUE UP TO THE VOTING IN THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE. IF SO, UNLESS THE RULES OF THE GAME CAN BE CHANGED OR UNLESS SOME OTHER KIND OF MIRACLE OCCURS, HE SEEMS FATED TO LOSE. HOWEVER, BY HIS SKILLFUL AND TIRELESS CAMPAIGNING SINCE HIS CRUSHING DEFEAT IN THE ARENA NOMINATING CONVENTION OF LAST APRIL, MAGALHAES HAS CONFOUNDED THE PUNDITS AND RETURNED TO THE FOREFRONT AS A KEY PARTICIPANT AND INGREDIENT IN THIS BRAZILIAN ELECTION YEAR. HE HAS ALSO TAKEN CARE TO POSITION HIMSELF SO THAT HE COULD PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION, ASSUMING (AS MOST OBSERVERS DO) THAT NEW POLITICAL PARTIES WILL COME INTO BEING AT SOME STATE IN THE PROCESS.

8. EMBASSY CONCURS.  
DEXTER

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## Message Attributes

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